REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated October 22, 2002. Claims 1 to 28 remain in the application and have all been amended. Claims 1, 7, 11, 17 and 21 to 28 are the independent claims herein. It is noted that this Amendment has been prepared in accordance with the Patent Office's revised format for amendments and therefore, where appropriate, waiver of 37 C.F.R. § 1.121 is respectfully requested. Moreover, reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,456,340 (Margulis). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns meta-data elements associated with a digital image. According to the invention, meta-data elements associated with a digital image have a self-describing attribute tag that describes an action to be performed on the meta-data when, for example, the digital image and another digital image are to be combined. In one aspect, the meta-data is augmented to the digital image data by adding the self-describing attribute tag to each meta-data element and a similarly identified meta-data element from the other digital image, in a case where the two images are to be combined, or in a case where the digital image is transformed. In related aspects, the meta-data elements are combined or updated by reading the attribute tags to identify the corresponding action and either combining or updating similar meta-data elements associated with the images in accordance with the identified action for those meta-data elements. As a result, the attribute tags of each meta-data element defines the action to be

taken on the meta-data elements so as to provide efficient management of the meta-data elements.

Referring specifically to the claims, amended independent Claim 1 is a method of augmenting meta-data associated with a digital image, wherein the meta-data comprises at least one meta-data element, the method comprising adding a self-describing attribute tag to each meta-data element, wherein each attribute tag added to a meta-data element describes an action to be performed on the meta-data element, and a similarly identified meta-data element from another digital image, in a case where the two images are combined.

Amended independent Claims 21 and 25 are apparatus and computer-readable medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 1.

Amended independent Claim 7 is along the lines of Claim 1 and is a method of augmenting meta-data associated with a digital image, wherein the meta-data comprises at least one meta-data element, the method comprising adding a self describing attribute tag to each meta-data element, wherein each attribute tag added to a meta-data element describes an action to be performed on the meta-data element in a case where the digital image is transformed.

Amended independent Claims 22 and 26 are apparatus and computer-readable medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 7.

Amended independent Claim 11 is a method of combining meta-data associated with a plurality of images, wherein the images each have associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element each having associated therewith an attribute tag which describes a corresponding action to be performed on the meta-data

element in a case where the images are combined, the method comprising the steps of reading the attribute tag of each meta-data element to identify the corresponding action, and combining similar meta-data elements associated with the images in accordance with the identified action for those meta-data elements.

Amended independent Claims 23 and 27 are apparatus and computer-readable medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 11.

Amended independent Claim 17 is a method of updating meta-data associated with a digital image, wherein the image has associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element each having associated therewith an attribute tag which describes a corresponding action to be performed on the meta-data element in a case where the image is transformed, the method comprising the steps of reading the attribute tag of each meta-data element to identify the corresponding action, and updating each meta-data element of the image in accordance with the identified action for that meta-data element.

Amended independent Claims 24 and 28 are apparatus and computer-readable medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 17.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention. More particularly, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of adding a self-describing attribute tag to each meta-data element, wherein each attribute tag added to a meta-data element describes an action to be performed on the meta-data element, and a similarly identified meta-data element from another digital image, in a case where the two images are combined (Claims 1, 21 and 25), or wherein each attribute tag added to a meta-data element describes an action to be

performed on the meta-data element in a case where the digital image is transformed (Claims 7, 22 and 26). With regard to Claims 11, 23 and 27, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of combining similar meta-data elements associated with images in accordance with an identified action of an attribute tag which describes the action to be performed for those meta-data elements in a case where the images are combined. As to Claims 17, 24 and 28, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of updating each meta-data element of an image in accordance with an identified action of an attribute tag which describes the action to be performed on the meta-data element in a case where the image is transformed.

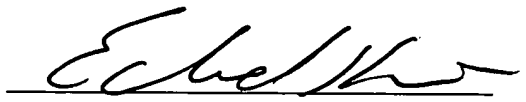
Margulis is seen to disclose an image processing apparatus for use in a display system. The apparatus has a display device for viewing an image, and a geometric transformation module that is configured to precondition the image data with geometric transformations to compensate for characteristics of the display system. The geometric transformation module is adapted to process an image-key meta data stream associated with a video data stream. The meta data stream includes a description of a key area in the video and data concerning an object to be placed in that key area of the video. The module keeps track of the key area in the video stream and replaces it with the object from the image-key meta data stream. (See column 16, line 38 to column 17, line 2.) Thus, Margulis merely describes the modification of image data with the meta data, but does not teach augmentation of meta data by adding an attribute tag to each meta data element, where each attribute tag describes an action to be performed on the meta data. That is, Margulis merely provides a way to enhance video displays by combining meta data and a video stream, but does not describe how the meta data itself is handled when images are

combined. Thus, while Margulis can add meta data to a video stream, there is nothing in Margulis which is seen to disclose or to suggest that the meta data includes an attribute tag that describes an action to be performed on the meta data. Accordingly, Margulis is not seen to disclose or to suggest the above-described features of Claims 1, 7, 11, 17 and 21 to 28.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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